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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 008111

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [EG](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S ORAL MESSAGE TO ARAB LEAGUE AMRE

MOUSSA ELICITS POSITIVE RESPONSE

REF: A. STATE 192650 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. CAIRO 8016 (NOTAL)

[1](#)C. CAIRO 7982 (NOTAL) NODIS

[1](#)D. CAIRO 7963 (NOTAL)

Classified by Ambassador Ricciardone for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador delivered the Secretary's oral message (ref A) during a meeting late October 19 with Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa - the eve of his departure to

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Iraq. Moussa received the message positively while focusing attention on the issues of a conference venue and MNF "withdrawal." Moussa intends to propose a "preparatory" meeting in Cairo as a "practical necessity, not an AL political requirement." He acknowledged that the Iraqi Transitional Government and the majority of Iraqis themselves might insist on meeting only in Iraq, and agreed that he would comply with Iraqi wishes. Moussa also repeated his expectation that he will "need" to address with Iraqis the topic of foreign troop withdrawal, while taking aboard our attempt to re-direct such a conversation more positively toward helping Iraqis stand on their own. While again commending Moussa's willingness to visit Iraq and engage politically, the Ambassador stressed the importance of avoiding in any way undermining either the elected Iraqi government or the political process put in place by UNSCR 1546, including the constitution. As part of his mission to Iraq, Moussa intends to announce the establishment in Baghdad of an Arab League diplomatic presence at the Ambassadorial level. End summary.

Secretary's Oral Message Reviewed

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[1](#)2. (C) During a late October 19 meeting at the residence of Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa, hours before Moussa's departure for Iraq, the Ambassador conveyed the Secretary's oral message (ref A) on his visit and on Arab

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League efforts on Iraq (refs B and C). The Ambassador underscored our fundamental concern that Moussa and the League must convey clearly to the Iraqis and the broader public that the AL recognized the legitimacy of both the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG), UNSCR 1546, and the results of the constitution referendum and do nothing that could be perceived as undermining them. Moussa stated that he "liked" the Secretary's message and Ambassador Jeffrey's statement of support for his mission.

Arab League Next Steps: Meeting Venue, Baghdad Office

[1](#)3. (C) Discussing the AL proposal to host a national conference of Iraqis, Moussa readily agreed that the Iraqis themselves will determine whatever name such a gathering would be given. But, Moussa underscored his interest in first hosting a "preparatory" gathering of Iraqis in Cairo at the Arab League "to allow the maximum number of regional foreign ministers and others to participate." Asked if the Cairo venue was a League political requirement, Moussa clarified that a meeting in Cairo was not a political objective but rather a "practical necessity" to increase participation of Arab ministers and others who might be unwilling to travel to Iraq due to security concerns. The Ambassador advised that the majority of Iraqis from all walks of life would probably want the meetings held in Iraq as a matter of national pride. Moreover, Iraqis more readily trust foreigners that come to them, thereby experiencing the day-to-day living conditions faced by Iraqis. They would be less likely to trust those who refused to visit Iraq, and indeed may draw unfavorable contrasts between the fearful Arab VIPs who dare not ever visit Baghdad, versus the many

westerners who both visit and stay there. Moussa took the point, saying that he would discuss the topic at length in Iraq.

14. (C) Moussa told the Ambassador that another outcome of his mission would be an announcement of plans to open an Arab League diplomatic mission in Baghdad in the near future. Moussa explained that he was thinking of sending someone with "Head of Mission rank with Ambassadorial title." (Note: October 20 press reporting quotes AL sources as saying that the League would establish an office in Baghdad: a notably forward-leaning move on Moussa's part. End note). By establishing an Arab League mission in Baghdad, Moussa added, AL member states would feel compelled to follow suit.

MNF Withdrawal Still High on Moussa's Agenda

15. (C) As expected, Moussa returned to the topic of MNF withdrawal and his need to at least discuss the issue with the Iraqis during his visit. While asserting that he aimed to support the UNSCR 1546 process, and certainly had no intention to undermine it or the ITG, Moussa insisted that additional efforts (i.e., those of the League and its member states) were required to bring disaffected (though not terrorist) groups into the political process and drain support for the resistance and insurgency. The Ambassador again cautioned Moussa to avoid taking any position that could even be taken to imply an AL effort to establish alternative processes to either the elected Iraqi government or the UNSCR 1546 political process. Any discussion of "withdrawal," in particular, should aim directly at supporting Iraqis in building their own security forces and taking full responsibility for their national security. Moussa said he "understood," and did not demur.

16. (C) Moussa said he had received death threats in addition to pleadings from friends and strangers not to make this trip. His wife was particularly unhappy but "accepts his responsibilities." Zarqawi and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood had both publicly criticized him for his trip. But, Moussa insisted that he would not be deterred from his mission.

Additional Itinerary Details of Visit

17. (C) Moussa noted his pleasure over his expected meeting Ambassador Khalilzad in Baghdad October 20. Moussa also explained that President Talabani requested their meeting take place in Sulaymaniyah on October 22, immediately before Moussa meets with Barzani in Irbil. He extended his visit by one day to accommodate both Kurdish leaders. Moussa expressed personal anxieties over the possible use of helicopters to get from Baghdad to Najaf, and from Irbil to Sulaymaniyah, but indicated his readiness to do so if necessary. Moussa and delegation plan to remain in Irbil overnight October 22, departing for Cairo on October 23.

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